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Published September 6, 2006

Ricky had 'look of terror on his face'

Tim Holland pleads guilty, blames wife in killing

By Stacey Range
Lansing State Journal

A sometimes sobbing Tim Holland pleaded guilty Tuesday to second-degree murder in the July 2005 death of his adopted 7-year-old son, Ricky.

Tim Holland's often gruesome details of the boy's death and what he described as years of abuse leading to it were a dramatic turning point in the case, setting the stage for Monday's start of the trial for his wife, Lisa Holland.

Until Tuesday, both were charged with open murder in Ricky's death. Each spouse had accused the other of killing the boy, who they reported missing July 2, 2005. Their missing person report prompted a massive manhunt for the boy.

Tim Holland's plea agreement, accepted by Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Paula Manderfield, is contingent upon his testimony against his wife. The agreement, which dropped a first-degree child abuse charge against Tim Holland, means he faces up to life in prison but has a chance of parole after 20 years,



(Photo by ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)
Tearful testimony: Tim Holland breaks down as he testifies Tuesday in Ingham County Circuit Court after pleading guilty to second-degree murder in the July 2005 death of his adopted 7-year-old son, Ricky. Under a plea agreement, Holland will testify against his wife, Lisa, who he says killed the boy.

Ricky Holland case timeline

- July 2, 2005: Tim Holland reports his oldest child, 7-year-old Ricky, missing from the family's Williamston home.
- July 4, 2005: Six hundred volunteers spend the holiday searching.
- July 10, 2005: Authorities end continuous ground searches.
- Oct. 14, 2005: Authorities take hair samples and fingerprints from Tim and Lisa Holland, their attorney says. For the first time, police describe the Hollands as "persons of interest."
- Jan. 26, 2006: Lisa Holland is arraigned on charges of assaulting her husband. She posts bond. Also, police for the first time classify both Lisa and Tim Holland as suspects in Ricky's disappearance.
- Jan. 27, 2006: Tim Holland leads police to Ricky's skeletal remains in rural Ingham County; Tim and Lisa Holland are detained and charged with obstruction of justice.
- Feb. 7, 2006: Tim and Lisa Holland are charged with murder in Ricky's death.
- Feb. 28, 2006: A preliminary hearing begins for Tim and Lisa Holland; Ingham County medical examiner says Ricky Holland's remains were too decomposed to confirm a cause of death.

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunning III said.

Under the lesser charge, Dunning said Tim Holland accepts that he acted in "wanton and willful disregard of the likelihood" that the abuse Ricky suffered at the hands of Lisa Holland could lead to death.

Andrew Abood, one of Lisa Holland's lawyers, said he didn't believe Tim Holland's guilty plea or his statements would hurt his client's defense and that he wouldn't seek a delay in her trial.

- April 11, 2006: After the 14-day preliminary hearing, Tim and Lisa Holland are ordered to stand trial on charges that they abused and killed Ricky.
- May 30, 2006: Prosecutors drop the obstruction of justice charge against the Hollands. Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield rules that the two will have separate juries, one trial. That's set for Sept. 11.
- Aug. 14, 2006: Tim Holland's Sept. 11 trial is stayed, pending an appeal based on statements he made Jan. 27.
- Aug. 18, 2006: Judge Paula Manderfield rules that Lisa Holland's trial will proceed on Sept. 11. She sets Tim Holland's trial for Jan. 22, 2007.
- Sept. 5, 2006: Tim Holland pleads guilty to second-degree murder; will testify against Lisa Holland. His sentencing is set for Nov. 1.

Related articles:

- [Wife would overmedicate boy, Holland says](#)
- [The court record of Tim Holland's guilty plea](#)

"He gave a statement under oath that does nothing but undermine his credibility," Abood said.

As an example, Abood pointed to a statement Tim Holland made earlier this year claiming to have seen his wife hit Ricky with a hammer.

Tim Holland on Tuesday didn't address whether he saw his wife kill Ricky. He did say that Lisa Holland told him in December which hammer she used when he pulled the "silver and copper metallic handled tack hammer" from a kitchen drawer to put together some toys for their other children.

"She told me not to use the hammer; that's the hammer she had hit Ricky with," Tim Holland testified.

In between occasional sobs, Tim Holland also detailed years of physical and mental abuse of Ricky, whom the Hollands took in as a foster child in the fall of 2000 when he was 3. He described a life that he said was "like living in a concentration camp" for Ricky.

Tim Holland, who used to work as a counterintelligence special agent for the Army, said he would come home to find Ricky handcuffed to his bed, locked in his bedroom and tied to chairs. Tim Holland said his wife told him she was afraid Ricky would steal food and therefore he had to be restrained.

He said Lisa Holland would make Ricky stand in one spot until he soiled himself and once put duct tape over Ricky's mouth and taped his head to the refrigerator. He also said his wife would tie up the boy and lock him in the basement.

"He was terrified of the basement," Tim Holland said. "It had all the spiders, and it was dark."

His attorney Frank Reynolds asked Tim Holland if the abuse was often.

"Anytime I would leave, yes," he replied.

Tim Holland said he never abused Ricky but admitted that he did nothing to stop it.

"At the time I loved her (Lisa), and I wanted to protect her and my family," he told the court.

That changed, he said, when his wife started abusing their younger son, Joseph, shortly after Ricky's death.

"She started treating Joseph the same way she treated Ricky," Tim Holland said. "I couldn't let it happen again."

The plea was in a sense cathartic for Holland, Reynolds said.

"This has been weighing very heavily on him for a long time," Reynolds said after the hearing. "He wanted to be able to talk about what had occurred. And I think too, to probably accept accountability for some of his actions."

Terry Burke, a Williamston- area resident whose family helped search for Ricky last summer, said Tim Holland's guilty plea was probably a good thing.

"A lot of us were concerned he'd get off on some kind of technicality," Burke said.

He hopes Tim Holland will get a life sentence.

"He doesn't deserve to be on the streets," Burke said.

Staff writer Chris Andrews contributed to this report. Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or srange@lsj.com.

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Published September 6, 2006

Wife would overmedicate boy, Holland says

Related articles:

- [Ricky had 'look of terror on his face'](#)

Ricky was 'acting like a zombie' on the day of his death

By Stacey Range
Lansing State Journal

Ricky Holland was purposefully overmedicated by his adoptive mother, Lisa Holland, and "acting like a zombie" on the day of his death, Tim Holland said in court Tuesday.

After detailing how his wife would medicate Ricky to "keep him doped up so he wouldn't bother her," Tim Holland gave the following account of what occurred on July 1, 2005:

At dinner, Ricky was quiet and ate very little, even though it was his favorite meal: Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Tim Holland said he fixed Ricky a plate with a chicken leg and a load of mashed potatoes. He didn't give him any coleslaw though; the boy didn't like it, Tim Holland said. But the omission angered Lisa Holland and she took away Ricky's plate, replacing it with a pile of coleslaw.

"He detests coleslaw," Tim Holland said.

After dinner, he said the family watched television before he tucked Ricky into bed around 7 p.m.

Tim Holland said his wife then sent him to a local convenience store to get her a treat. When he returned about 30 minutes later, Holland said he found an agitated Lisa Holland. He said he asked her what was wrong.

"She goes, 'No, let's just go to bed,' " Tim Holland recalled.

But Ricky's bedroom light was on, and Tim Holland said he went in to check on him.

"I found my son laying the opposite way in his bed with an utter look of terror on his face," Tim Holland said, his face reddening and voice cracking. "His mouth was open and he had red vomit or stuff all over his ... from his mouth down to his shirt.

"He was in a fetal position," Tim Holland said, balling his fists to show the court. "I put my head on his chest to see if I could hear a heartbeat. I didn't hear a heartbeat or feel a pulse."

"At that point Ricky was dead?" asked Frank Reynolds, Tim Holland's attorney.

"Yes, sir," Tim Holland replied.

Lisa Holland, he said, was outside the bedroom door screaming: " 'I didn't mean to do it. I didn't mean to do it.' She said, 'Get his body out of the house.' "

In leading police to Ricky's body in January, Tim Holland confessed that he buried the boy in a wooded area near Dansville, per his wife's instructions.

Tim Holland didn't say in court how he thought his wife killed Ricky, although he has said in the past that Lisa Holland hit the boy twice on the head with a small hammer.

Reynolds said Tim Holland believes his wife killed Ricky while he was at the store.

"Something happened while he was gone," Reynolds said.

Contact Stacey Range at srange@lsj.com or 377-1157.

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Father pleads guilty in Ricky's death

But Tim Holland says wife made life 'concentration camp'

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF

FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU CHIEF

September 6, 2006

LANSING -- Tim Holland pleaded guilty to second-degree murder Tuesday but blamed his wife for the July 2005 death of their 7-year-old son, Ricky.

In a dramatic turn, Tim Holland told Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield that his wife, Lisa Holland, abused Ricky for several years, drugged him and threatened to kill him.

Lisa Holland, 33, who faces an open murder charge in a trial set to start Monday, has said her husband was responsible for Ricky's death.

Fighting back tears, Tim Holland, 37, described living conditions for Ricky as "like a concentration camp" in which his mother constantly berated him, hit him with objects including a tack hammer, tied him up and made him stand in one spot until he soiled himself.

Holland said she once hit Ricky so hard with a spoon, that blood splattered on a wall.

"She had an immense hatred for Ricky," Holland said. He said he led authorities to his son's body in a state game area last January because he feared his wife would abuse their younger children.

Holland described coming home in the evening of July 1, 2005, to find his wife agitated and Ricky lying in a fetal position in his bed, red vomit on his shirt, eyes open and no pulse.

"She was screaming, 'I didn't mean to, I didn't mean to,' " Holland said of his wife.

He said he and Lisa Holland then took Ricky's body in a plastic bag to hide it at a



Tim Holland dries tears as he testifies in court Tuesday in Lansing about what he said were years of abuse against his adopted son Ricky. Holland pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in Ricky's 2005 death. (ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)

state game area.

Tim Holland said he should have taken his son to a doctor earlier in the evening because the boy was acting strangely, adding, "He had a 1,000-yard stare, he acted like a zombie."

Holland's chilling, 45-minute testimony detailed alleged abuses, both physical and mental, of a boy whose disappearance sparked a 12-day manhunt around Williamston, where the family lived, as the parents allegedly sought to cover up Ricky's death.

As part of his plea agreement, Tim Holland will testify at his wife's trial.

Lisa Holland's attorney, Michael Nichols, said Tim Holland's testimony Tuesday was substantially different from what he has said previously to investigators.

"It absolutely changes the case. A lot of that stuff I've never heard before," Nichols said.

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III said that Tim Holland aided and abetted Ricky's death and did not try to help the boy, which justifies a second-degree murder charge.

Dunnings added, "There's more to this than just Ricky; there's a lot of this out there. We see a lot of it."

In court Tuesday, Holland described how Ricky was struck by his mother, repeatedly tied in restraints, taped to a refrigerator door with duct tape on his mouth and forced by his mother to wear diapers to school. At one point, Tim Holland's attorney, Frank Reynolds, asked him, "You recklessly disregarded that he was in a harmful situation?"

"Yes, sir," Holland replied.

Holland said he went to authorities because he believed his wife was repeating her abuse with their younger son, whom she attempted to pull out of his school.

"I figured I would come home and find one if not all of them dead," Holland said.

He said his wife often called him at his workplace complaining about Ricky, adding, "She said if I didn't come home right away, she was going to kill him."

Asked why he never called authorities to intervene, Tim Holland said, "I wanted to protect my family and protect my children."

Ricky and his four younger biological siblings all were adopted by Tim and Lisa Holland. The Hollands also have a younger biological child. All the children are in the custody of Tim Holland's relatives.

Tim and Lisa Holland are being held in the Ingham County Jail. They were both arrested in late January after Tim Holland went to authorities to complain that his wife had abused him, among other things throwing an electric hair dryer at him while he showered. Later, he took authorities to Ricky's body. Tim Holland is scheduled for sentencing Nov. 1 or after his wife's trial ends.

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September 6, 2006

Dad pleads guilty, says wife beat Ricky

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

LANSING -- Guilt over years of abuse apparently culminated Tuesday when the father of slain 7-year-old Ricky Holland pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and agreed to testify against his wife when her trial starts next week.

In making his plea, Tim Holland, 37, told Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield that his wife, Lisa Holland, 34, routinely tortured Ricky before killing him with a hammer -- and that he should have done something to stop it.

"I think it's the emotional strain. It was something he wanted to relate and get it off his chest," said his defense attorney Frank Reynolds, adding that Tim Holland's defense team negotiated the plea deal with prosecutors over the Labor Day weekend.

The Hollands, who lived near Williamston, adopted Ricky through the state foster care system when he was 3 years old. They later adopted three of Ricky's siblings, who are now staying with Tim Holland's relatives.

In an hour and a half of testimony, Tim Holland claimed that Lisa hit Ricky with objects, bound him in handcuffs, duct-taped his mouth and punished him by making him stand until he soiled himself -- all the while playing the state's social services system to get higher adoption subsidies for him.

Holland testified he walked into Ricky's room the day he died, July 1, 2005, and saw an "utter look of terror on his face."

"His mouth was open and he had red vomit all (over)," Holland said, adding he checked for a pulse and found none.

Presuming the boy was missing, thousands of volunteers searched for the body until he was found in a field in January.

The state paid the couple about \$26,000 a year for adopting the boy and two of his siblings, state officials confirmed. Although financial support for Ricky ended when he went missing, the Hollands adopted another of his siblings and began drawing nearly \$8,000 per year for that child.

Tim Holland testified that Lisa grilled state social services workers for details on how to qualify Ricky for higher payments that go to special needs children. Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunning III agreed to drop first-degree murder claims and child abuse charges against Tim Holland, provided Holland pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder charge.

Dunning said there are others who may be charged, but he would not name them.

Lisa Holland's attorney, Andrew Abood, said his client maintains her innocence.

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Adoptive father pleads guilty in Ricky Holland's death

9/5/2006, 7:00 p.m. ET

By DAVID EGGERT
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The adoptive father of Ricky Holland pleaded guilty Tuesday to second-degree murder in the 7-year-old's death and agreed to testify against his wife in exchange for possibly avoiding life in prison.

Tim Holland said his wife, Lisa, struck Ricky in the head with a hammer at their Williamston home in July 2005. He had told authorities a similar story in January before leading them to Ricky's body in rural Ingham County.

Tim Holland's plea came after his attorney and prosecutors discussed a deal throughout the holiday weekend. He gave a statement to police Sunday and again in an Ingham County courtroom Tuesday.

"He gave some specific details ... he outlined the treatment Ricky received at the hands of Lisa Holland and his failure to intervene on the boy's behalf," Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunning III said in a phone interview.

First-degree murder and child abuse charges against Tim Holland were dropped, but they remain against Lisa Holland, whose trial is scheduled to start next week. First-degree murder is punishable by life without parole while second-degree murder can bring a life sentence or "any term of years" — plus the chance for parole.

Tim Holland, 37, said Lisa, 33, overmedicated Ricky, causing him to act like a "zombie." He likened Ricky's living conditions to a concentration camp because he was tied up in restraints and made to stand until soiling himself.

Under the agreement, Tim Holland pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting first-degree child abuse, and having a reckless disregard for Ricky's welfare while knowing death was a foreseeable consequence.

Tim Holland said he did not stop the abuse because "he loved Lisa and felt his love would be adequate for her to change over time," according to Dunning.

Mike Nichols, an attorney for Lisa Holland, said her husband's guilty plea was expected and that Lisa continues to assert her innocence. He said Tim Holland gave a lot of details — "stuff I've certainly never heard from him before."

Ricky vanished from his Williamston home 15 miles east of Lansing on July 1, 2005. His parents told searchers and the media that he had run away.

But in late January, Tim Holland led authorities to Ricky's body in a game area after telling them his wife struck the boy twice in the head with a hammer. Tim Holland said he only helped dispose of the body, but Lisa Holland said her husband killed him.

Ricky's body was found in the fetal position, wrapped in a dark blue fitted bedsheet and plastic garbage bags. Medical examiners classified his death as homicide by unspecified means and found fractures to his upper body and face.

During the Hollands' preliminary exam, witnesses testified that Ricky was constantly hungry and malnourished, leaving him short for his age and underweight.

They portrayed Lisa Holland as an overbearing mother who badmouthed Ricky, unnecessarily had him harnessed when he rode a school bus, brought him to school on a leash and wanted school officials to discipline him for his bad behavior at home by withholding treats.

Defense attorneys questioned the testimony by characterizing Ricky as a rambunctious child who hit himself in the face and banged his head into walls when he was younger. He was diagnosed with numerous psychological disorders, and many people who had direct contact with Ricky testified they never suspected or reported abuse.

Tim and Lisa Holland took Ricky in as a foster child when he was 3 years old and adopted him in 2003. Testimony in the preliminary exam showed state workers received complaints that Ricky was being abused, but they were unsubstantiated.

Tim Holland is to be sentenced on Nov. 1, though that could change depending on how long Lisa Holland's trial takes.

Dunnings said what allegedly happened to Ricky is not unusual.

"This kind of thing is going on in many homes to a lot of children all over the state," he said.

Dunnings, a Democrat, said he does not want to suggest no mistakes were made by child protection workers in the state Department of Human Services, but added: "From my perspective, as someone who has to deal with this on a daily basis, the real problem here is the Legislature has failed to provide adequate funding for the department to protect our children. ... I guess the protection of little children is not at top of the list."

But state Rep. David Law, a West Bloomfield Republican and chair of the House Special Committee on Child Protection that has been investigating Ricky's death, said it is wrong to blame mistakes by child protection workers solely on funding levels. He said he has twice requested an analysis on workers' caseloads in recent months, but has yet to get the information from the state.

"Could (money) be a factor? Could training be a factor? I think we'd be negligent as a state to bury our heads in the sand and say it's just about money," Law said. "It's very easy to blame it on money. Please get me some proof of it."

Law said child protection is a priority for both Republicans and Democrats, and said there is no quick fix to keeping children from slipping through the cracks until it is too late.

David Eggert can be reached at [deggert\(at\)ap.org](mailto:deggert(at)ap.org)

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Tim Holland pleads guilty in son Ricky's death

Updated: Sep 5, 2006 07:32 PM EDT



Tim Holland

By [PATRICK CENTER](#)

LANSING -- The adoptive father of Ricky Holland pleaded guilty Tuesday to second-degree murder in the 7-year-old's death.

Under the agreement, Tim Holland will testify against his wife, Lisa, whose trial on first-degree murder charges is to start Monday.



Lisa Holland

On the witness stand Tuesday, Tim Holland recounted the evening Ricky died. "When I walked into the room I found my son lying the opposite way in the bed with an utter look of terror on his face," Tim Holland said, as tears flowed down his face.

Tim said he put his son to bed. "He just wasn't acting like himself. He wasn't acting like the Ricky that I knew."

Tim recalled Ricky had trouble walking to bed that night. He now believes he should have taken his son to see a doctor.



Ricky Holland

Once tucked in, Tim told the judge he turned out the light, "walked out and Lisa had asked me to go down to the Citgo in Williamston and pick up a treat for her."

Tim returned 30 minutes later and his wife was waiting. Tim said she was "agitated and upset."

Tim said he noticed Ricky's bedroom light was on, went to check on his son, and discovered him lying in a puddle of vomit.

"I checked to see if there was a pulse. I put my head on his chest to see if I could hear his heartbeat, and I could not hear a heartbeat or feel a pulse," Tim told the courtroom.

Tim Holland was then asked if at that point Ricky was dead. "Yes sir."

That was July 2005. Both Tim and Lisa told authorities their son ran away.

In January 2006, Ricky's body was found after Tim told authorities where to look. The body was recovered in southern Ingham County, not far from his Williamston home.

"What Mr. Holland said was that he knew the pattern of abuse. He appreciated the pattern of abuse. He failed to do anything about the pattern of abuse," said Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III. "And that, in and of itself, established the want and willful disregard of the likelihood that the natural tendency would be death or great bodily harm."

Tim Holland will be sentenced November 1.

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Mom pleads guilty to killing daughter

Keith Baldi

Created: 9/5/2006 5:44:59 PM
Updated: 9/5/2006 7:09:27 PM

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Grand Rapids- As a jury was being prepared for her murder trial, 21-year-old Samantha Winkler was discussing her fate with her lawyers. Her decision, forgo the court case, and instead plead guilty to second degree murder, which carries a possible life sentence. However, neither she nor her attorneys gave an explanation of what happened last July in her Grand Rapids home.

That's when emergency crews were called and found Winkler's 2-year-old daughter Aiyana Cisneros unconscious. An autopsy later uncovered severe internal injuries, and her death was ruled a murder.

Authorities had been to the house before, a few weeks prior to investigate some strange bruises that Aiyana had. And, while many cases like this do not end in murder, experts like Candace Cowling, the Executive Director of the Child and Family Resource Council, believe many children in West Michigan are in danger.

"How many children are out there that we don't see and that's why we want to get to parents before this occurs. How many more headlines are we going to see to say it's unacceptable in our community," Cowling said from her Grand Rapids office.

Cowling says the cases authorities hear about are a small percentage of a larger problem. And, even though child abuse may be under reported, the numbers social agencies have are not encouraging. In Kent County, abuse and neglect cases continue to go up every year. In 2005 there were 9,810, that's up about 1,100 cases in 5 years.

"It's really important that parents reach out and realize there doesn't have to be a stigma attached and anyone can use some help in parenting," Cowling adds.

It's impossible to tell whether that help would have made a difference to Aiyana Cisneros, but there certainly are cases where it can save the most vulnerable.

One of the best resources for parents who need help is the 211 Hotline. It's a free call and they can direct you to a number of resources.

Web Editor: [John Bumgardner](#), Assignment Desk



Web Editor: [Keith Baldi](#), Reporter



Aiyana Cisneros



Samantha Winkler

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Wednesday, September 06, 2006

The Detroit News

Livingston briefs

Teacher returns after abuse charge dismissed

A special education teacher returned to work in the Wayne-Westland Community Schools on Tuesday after being acquitted last month of abusing her son in their Putnam Township home. Darcy-Ann Cervelli, 38, had been suspended from her teaching job at Wayne Memorial High School since March when she was charged with paddling her 13-year-old son. A Livingston County jury found her not guilty of second-degree child abuse in mid-August.



Legislation targets online child predators

9/5/2006, 3:59 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Child predators could face sanctions if they try to use commercial networking services such as MySpace.com or AOL chat rooms under legislation announced Tuesday in the state House.

Internet sites that would be restricted include social networking services that permit users to create online profiles, share online journals and let users to communicate with each other.

The restrictions would apply to people convicted of criminal sexual conduct or sexual abusive behavior toward a child, and are aimed at stopping offenders from looking for victims online.

"The majority of people who use these sites do so with harmless and even useful intentions, but that's not who we're targeting," said Rep. David Farhat, a Republican from Fruitport. "With this legislation, we want to make sure that those individuals who would manipulate and coerce children and young adults are stopped before they have a chance to do any harm."

Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township, is sponsoring the other bill in the two-bill package.

He said current law requires an actual proposition to be made before law enforcement officials can act. The new legislation would give prosecutors an extra tool to protect children.

Violating the legislation would lead to a one-year misdemeanor charge for a first offense and a five-year felony charge for each subsequent offense.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

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Dauids Introduce MySpace Legislation

MIRS, Tuesday, September 5, 2006

Reps. David [LAW](#) (R-Commerce Twp.) and David [FARHAT](#) (R-Fruitport) introduced legislation that they say will keep sex predators out of MySpace.com.

The legislation will keep sex offenders from participating in online communities by prohibiting registered sex offenders from creating profiles. It's unclear exactly how they will do this because sites like MySpace don't ask for a person's ID. Anyone can create a site under any name.

"There are a lot of people on the Internet to take advantage of children and young adults," Law said. "Currently, a child has to be physically harmed or an actual proposition has to be made before law enforcement can act. By then it's too late. This legislation will give prosecutors one extra tool to better protect children."

Legislature Wants Oversight Over Ombudsman

MIRS, Tuesday, September 5, 2006

Look for legislation to move in the House that will move the Children's Ombudsman from the executive to the legislative branch of government.

The move is part of the reform package being drafted by House Republicans, who have been thwarted in their efforts to get a look-see at the abuse/murder investigation of 7-year-old Ricky **HOLLAND** of Williamston by the Ombudsman's office.

Rep. David **LAW** (R-Commerce Twp.) said by transplanting the agency under legislative control, lawmakers would be able to review child abuse cases with an eye toward reducing injuries and, in some cases, the deaths of young children.

Commenting on the Holland criminal case that's now in an Ingham County courtroom, Law said, "There's information I would like to see," but access to all of the files has been denied.

Law wants assurances that impartial and independent reviews of these cases are conducted and as long as the Ombudsman is under the thumb of the Department of Human Services (DHS), which knew of Holland's foster care situation. He said he's concerned.

"There may not be proof (of any wrongdoing), but even the looks that maybe the investigation isn't being conducted independently, just the appearance of that is wrong," he told *MIRS*.

He said some have argued that since the DHS is supposed to protect the children, when something goes wrong, the department ends up investigating itself through the Ombudsman's office.

"That's been the argument that some have put out there, and we want to make sure that argument can no longer exist," Law said.

Critics of the move may argue that politics may come into play if lawmakers get more authority in the child abuse area.

Law countered, "I don't think it will be political if it's under the legislative branch."

He said he thinks the transfer measure could be on the House floor within one to two weeks.



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Published September 6, 2006

Proposal would pay doctors more to accept Medicaid

Increase in reimbursement rate to encourage preventive care

Associated Press

The state could soon start paying doctors about 30 percent more for wellness checks and physical examinations for children and adults covered by Medicaid in an effort to reduce more serious and costly health problems later on.

New rates?

- For a complete physical for new patients 1 to 4 years old, Medicaid would pay \$77, up from about \$59.
- Reimbursement for physicals for new adult patients would jump from \$80 to \$104.
- Blue Cross Blue Shield currently reimburses doctors about \$129.

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As part of budget negotiations for the 2007 fiscal year, the plan would increase reimbursement rates to give more doctors incentive to provide preventive care.

The added \$16.6 million cost would be covered by budget cuts elsewhere in the Medi-caid budget, said T.J. Bucholz, a spokesman for the Department of Community Health. The department will up its pursuit of payments by other insurers and attempt to reduce errors in determining who's eligible the program, Bucholz told Booth Newspapers.

For a head-to-toe physical for new patients 1 to 4 years old, Medicaid would pay \$77, up from about \$59. Blue Cross Blue Shield currently reimburses doctors about \$129.

Reimbursement for physicals for new adult patients would jump from \$80 to \$104.

The extra cash might not guarantee more doctors will switch to Medicaid, cautioned Jane Zehnder-Merrell of the Michigan League for Human Services.

"It remains to be seen whether that increase will make much of a difference," Zehnder-Merrell said. "Rates are so far below the standard rate that even with the increase, it may not be enough to bring the Medicaid rate in line."

But it might also keep Medicaid patients from making unnecessary trips to expensive hospital

emergency rooms, said state Rep. Bruce Caswell, R-Hillsdale, chairman of the appropriations subcommittee on community health.

The increase won't cover all expenses, but preventive care could help patients, said Dr. Paul Farr, a Grand Rapids gastroenterologist and president of the Michigan State Medical Society.

"If you have to put it on only one thing, it should be where you can prevent the big expenses later - treating hypertension and high cholesterol, preventing smoking," Farr said.

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Mental health funding woes worry officials

Wednesday, September 06, 2006

JILL ARMENTROUT

THE SAGINAW NEWS

Mental health providers in Saginaw County and judges who deal with people in crisis are voicing concern about funding changes that will end counseling for hundreds of adults.

The Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority has notified its four outpatient providers it will discontinue service for adults in outpatient therapy Saturday, Sept. 30.

Case management teams, including Saginaw Psychological Services, will take over primary services for some of the 575 adults affected.

County Probate Judge Patrick J. McGraw said he's worried he will see more petitions for hospitalizations. Police forces, emergency rooms and social services all will feel the impact and face greater caseloads, McGraw told members of the County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday.

Chief Probate Judge Faye M. Harrison, who oversees family and juvenile cases, said children and schools also could take a hit.

"There isn't an agency in the county that is not going to be impacted by this," she said.

Those with Medicaid coverage still will have counseling benefits under their health plans, but several hundred without insurance will lose their safety net.

"The mentally ill in our county will not go away, just because service is not available to them," said Dr. Harold B. Lenhart, a psychiatrist with HealthSource Saginaw. "They will be on the streets or in jail or dead. They need to be served. We can do better than this."

Sandra M. Lindsey, chief executive officer for the authority, told commissioners the new strategy is necessary to deal with 2006-07 Medicaid rates that result in a \$5 million reduction in funding for each year.

State officials lessened the impact in 2006, but mental health services must change to meet shortfalls in the 2007 budget that could reach \$4 million, Lindsey said. She may not know for several months how much the state general fund will contribute. Nearly all reserves will go to meet the deficit in the 2006 budget, she said.

Counseling providers are reviewing the 575 cases for medical necessity to see who is ready to end service and who could return to primary care doctors. With a month left to go in the process, providers have identified 80 clients who will transfer to case management teams.

The authority already uses exacting requirements to accept patients -- they must have needed hospitalization or stabilization care in the past year -- and turns away 100 people a month on average, Lindsey said.

New eligibility criteria take into account diagnosis, degree and duration of disability, and use of services. Under state regulations, the authority must serve patients who have severe and persistent illness, including "thought disorders" such as schizophrenia. Those with "mood disorders" such as depression may not meet the new criteria, Lindsey said.

Thomas A Rychling, 63, of Chesaning is finding himself on his own. He has received treatment through the authority for his bipolar disorder since 1996, after he had to stop driving trucks because of his medication.

He has Medicare and disability insurance, but can't afford counseling and will struggle with medicine costs, he said.

"I've had things under control and was going pretty good, but now the depression is coming back," Rychling said.

Lindsey said providers are giving patients time for transition. The goal is to take money out of traditional outpatient therapy and use it to bolster case management with the belief that this will reduce inpatient hospital costs, she said.

Case management offers social supports such as housing, employment assistance and club houses, as well as psychiatric care and therapy.

Lenhart disagrees, saying this new strategy will have the opposite effect and result in more and longer hospital stays. He said the authority is spending too much per patient, instead of spreading dollars among more people in need.

In 2005, the authority spent 37 percent of the \$18.6 million spent on 3,229 adults with mental illness on inpatient hospitalization care -- the highest rate in the state. Four percent of that budget, about \$690,000, went to outpatient individual therapy.

Mark Kraynak, a social worker with HealthSource, said he is concerned about finding follow-up care for patients leaving hospital treatment.

"How can we tell them there are no services and they have to see their primary care doctor? It hurts. We don't want people to come back," he said.

Lindsey said she doesn't think the people who are leaving counseling are those who need repeated hospital treatment.

"We will monitor the situation carefully," she said. "We don't want tragedies. That's why we are going through these cases in great detail."

Commissioner Raymond F. Bartels said the county should audit the mental health authority budget for itself because it contributes about \$1.5 million each year.

"Maybe we could give some suggestions about how to cut costs," he said. "We've had to make our own cuts."

The authority's administrative costs run about 10 percent of the total \$45 million budget.

Officials have secured \$451,000 in state grants for 2007, which will help pay for better case management and training.

Lindsey said Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm's \$1 billion MI First Health Care Plan, which could start in April, would help many of the uninsured working poor find mental health services.

Commissioner Robert M. Woods Jr., who also sits on the mental health board, asked Chairwoman Cheryl M. Hadsall to form a committee to work in liaison among the mental health authority, HealthSource and county and state officials to find solutions. v

Jill Armentrout is a medical writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach her at 776-9681.



Purse-snatching latest in alarming kid-crime trend

FLINT TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, September 06, 2006

By Bryn Mickle

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FLINT TWP. - The arrest of an 11-year-old boy in a purse-snatching last week is a troublesome sign for Genesee County Prosecutor David S. Leyton.

With the breakdown of the family, Leyton said juveniles are getting involved in increasingly violent crimes.

"It's kind of a coming of age," said Leyton.

Three Flint boys were charged with involuntary manslaughter in April after a 92-year-old woman died following a purse-snatching in Flint Township.

In the latest incident, police said an 11-year-old boy was riding an MTA bus Thursday afternoon when he and a Flint man, 18, decided to rob a passenger.

The pair allegedly waited until a Flint woman, 70, got off the bus at the Genesee Valley shopping center before grabbing her purse and running across Linden Road.

Their escape route, however, took them toward the Flint Township police station, and they were arrested a short time later in a nearby field.

The woman wasn't hurt, and police recovered her purse and money.

Investigators said the pair didn't put much thought into their plan.

"It appears they developed the plan while riding on the bus," said township police Chief George Sippert. "It didn't work out for them."

Flint Township Senior Center Director Linda Moore said the robbery demonstrated a clear lack of values and respect for elders.

"I think they should be strung up," said Moore.

The 11-year-old and his alleged partner face unarmed robbery charges, and Sippert said he is concerned about the recent trend toward assault crimes committed by young people.

But Sippert is at a loss to explain why young people are targeting the elderly.

"I don't have answers except these are crimes of opportunity," said Sippert.

Until society addresses issues that leave children without direction and parental guidance, Leyton said such crimes will continue.

"It's a very steep hill we have to climb to right this ship," said Leyton.

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Protection order office changes home

Pontiac shelter will run program

BY KIM NORRIS

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

September 6, 2006

When the Women's Survival Center in Pontiac announced last month that it was closing its doors after 29 years of service to the community because of funding issues, the fate of its many programs was left in question.

But one of the orphaned programs is being adopted by another organization devoted to helping women.

Haven, based in Pontiac, will take over the center's Personal Protection Office on Oct. 1.

The office helps people through the process of obtaining a protection order. To obtain a protection order, a motion must be filed with a judge, who authorizes such orders.

Those who choose to represent themselves, rather than use a lawyer, can use the Personal Protection Office for guidance, forms, referrals and follow-up assistance. Haven can provide referrals to shelters, counseling and other social and legal services.

Beth Morrison, president and chief executive officer of Haven, said the Women's Survival Center often referred women to Haven, where they could receive counseling and shelter. Haven operates the only shelter in Oakland County specifically for victims of domestic violence. The organization has about 45 adults and children in residence at any time.

Adding the Personal Protection Office "is a good fit for our organization," Morrison said, adding that the women who seek personal protection orders frequently are ones who could benefit from the other programs that Haven offers.

Located in the Oakland County Circuit Court building at 1200 N. Telegraph in Pontiac, the Personal Protection Office served 2,600 people in 2004-05. The service is available to anyone who comes in for a personal protection order,

Morrison said.

Most of those people are women and victims of domestic violence, but the office also helps people seeking protection orders because of sexual assaults or stalking.

The Personal Protection Office is mostly funded by the federal Victims of Crime Act, which provides funds through the Michigan Crime Victims Services Commission.

In addition to the Personal Protection Office, the Women's Survival Center provided other legal services, counseling and child care.

Morrison said she hopes Haven and other agencies will continue to meet the needs of those who relied on the Women's Survival Center.

"I certainly hope it's not going to cause a crisis for people," Morrison said, adding that other agencies are chipping in.

Contact **KIM NORRIS** at 248-351-5186 or norris@freepress.com.

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Michigan Report

September 5, 2006

E.I.T.C./YOUTH WAGE BILLS PASS HOUSE

Wrapping up a deal that allowed for federal exemptions to an increased minimum wage remain in place, the House on Tuesday finalized legislation that would provide low-income residents with an earned income tax credit, as well as install a youth minimum wage.

The youth minimum wage would be equal to 85 percent of the state's minimum wage under [SB 1364](#). [Rep. Bill Huizenga](#) (R-Zeeland) tried to amend the bill to include an exemption to the wage for students who work at college facilities, but that amendment failed for lack of support and Mr. Huizenga said the issue would have to be dealt with at a later time.

House [Speaker Craig DeRoche](#) (R-Novi) said the student exemption was not amended into the bill because it was not part of the negotiated deal over in the Senate. SB 1364 was approved on a 92-14 vote, with all dissenting votes coming from Democrats.

"We wanted to get these bills to the governor's desk today," Mr. DeRoche said.

There was talk on the floor that some Democrats wanted to amend the earned income tax credit bill, [SB 453](#), to have the state credit eventually match 25 percent of the federal credit (the Senate passed a 20 percent mark), but that amendment was never offered up for a vote.

Instead, [Rep. Steve Tobocman](#) (D-Detroit) said that action on the EITC and youth wage legislation was the "best public policy" he'd seen in his four years, and that, "There's no better tool than moving people out of poverty (than) by rewarding those low wage workers."

But not everybody felt so, as the EITC bill passed with three dissenting votes from House Majority Floor Leader Chris Ward (R-Brighton), [Rep. Leon Drolet](#) (R-Clinton Township) and [Rep. Bob Gosselin](#) (R-Troy), 103-3.

Mr. Drolet said he opposed the bill because it pays some citizens to not pay taxes essentially.

"Over 88 percent of those eligible for this credit get refunds in excess of what they actually paid in taxes. In other words, the state is taking money from some citizens and paying it out to other citizens in cash."

Going off of 2004 numbers, Mr. Drolet said that while 662,912 Michigan residents filed for the federal EITC and claimed \$1.169 billion in income taxes, 586,327 got credits back totaling \$1 billion.

But Paul Long with the Michigan Catholic Conference thanked lawmakers for coming together in a bipartisan manner to provide needed assistance.

“A state earned income tax credit will not only provide economic assistance to those who are working in low-paying jobs, but also will prove to generate economic growth in the state,” he said. “By phasing in a state credit equal to 20 percent of the federal credit over two years, the House has acted in a compassionate manner to help enhance the dignity of the working poor of the state.”



House finalizes deal on OT, minimum wage

9/5/2006, 7:53 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan will have a youth-specific minimum wage when the rates rise in October.

The state's current minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour. It would rise to \$6.95 for most workers next month, but employees under 18 would get \$5.91 an hour under a bill that got final approval from the Legislature on Tuesday.

The House passed the bill by a 92-14 vote. The Senate passed the bill last week. The legislation is headed to Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who supports the deal.

Both minimum wages are set to rise again in 2007 and 2008.

The House on Tuesday also wrapped up other parts of a package designed at keeping the status quo for overtime eligibility in Michigan while raising the minimum wage.

Legislation passed by a 103-3 vote would provide a state tax credit for low-income workers. The legislation, which also is headed toward Granholm's approval, would allow a state earned-income tax credit on top of the existing federal credit. The credit would start at 10 percent in 2008 and rise to 20 percent in 2009.

In 2004, about 663,000 families with incomes below \$35,458 received federal refund checks for earned income tax credits, averaging \$1,764. Based on those numbers, families would get a refund check from the state for just above \$350 on average once the tax credit rises to 20 percent.

The agreement also will keep salespeople, truckers and many other types of workers ineligible for overtime pay. Both the Senate and House passed the legislation restoring the status quo on OT eligibility last week.

Fourteen House members, all Democrats, voted against the youth minimum wage bill. They were Frank Accavitti of Eastpointe, Glenn Anderson of Westland, Doug Bennett of Muskegon, Steve Bieda of Warren, Matt Gillard of Alpena, John Gleason of Flushing, Alexander Lipsey of Kalamazoo, Bill McConico of Detroit, Andy Meisner of Ferndale, Fred Miller of Mount Clemens, Alma Wheeler Smith of Ypsilanti, Carl Williams of Saginaw, Lisa Wojno of Warren and Paula Zelenko of Burton.

Some Democrats were not in favor of having a separate minimum wage for young workers.

Three Republicans — Leon Drolet of Macomb County's Clinton Township, Bob Gosselin of Troy and Chris Ward of Brighton — voted against the earned income tax bill.

Shelley Taub, a Republican from Bloomfield Hills, did not vote on either bill.

The youth minimum wage bill is Senate Bill 1364. The earned-income tax credit is SB 453.

On the Net:



House passes adoption services bill

9/5/2006, 6:52 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Private adoption agencies could not be forced to participate in placements that violate their written religious or moral convictions under terms of a bill passed Tuesday by the state House.

The two-bill package passed by identical 69-37 votes. The legislation now goes to the Senate.

The bills also would prevent state or local government agencies from denying a child placement agency grants or contracts because of the agency's religious convictions or policies.

An agency's refusal to participate in a placement that violates its religious policies would not constitute a determination that the proposed adoption is not in the best interests of the child, according to a bill analysis by the nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency.

The Michigan Catholic Conference welcomed the House action.

"As a matter of religious freedom, faith-based agencies can and should be able to provide child placement services within the precepts of their faith tradition without obstruction from state government," Paul Long, the conference's vice president for public policy, said in a statement.

Twelve Democrats joined the House's Republican majority supporting the bill.

The Democrats voting in favor of the bill were Kathy Angerer of Dundee, Rich Brown of Bessemer, Ed Clemente of Lincoln Park, Andy Dillon of Redford, John Espinoza of Croswell, John Gleason of Flushing, Jeff Mayes of Bay City, Gary McDowell of Rudyard, Gino Polidori of Dearborn, Michael Sak of Grand Rapids, Joel Sheltrown of West Branch and Dudley Spade of Tipton.

Shelley Taub, a Republican from Bloomfield Hills, did not vote.

The adoption agency bills are House Bills 5908 and 5909.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

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Michigan Report

September 5, 2006

CHILD ADOPTION: Privately-owned child placing agencies would not have to aid or perform an adoption if the placement violates its religious or moral convictions and policies under two bills approved on divided votes by the House. Passed were [HB 5908](#) and [HB 5909](#) on a vote of 69-37 each.

The Michigan Catholic Conference heralded the passage and urged further consideration of the legislation.

Mr. Long said, "As a matter of religious freedom, faith-based agencies can and should be able to provide child placement services within the precepts of their faith tradition without obstruction from state government."



Muskegon Chronicle

Suspects sought in alleged \$18,000 scam

Wednesday, September 06, 2006

FROM LOCAL REPORTS

The Grand Haven Department of Public Safety is seeking information on two women it says stole \$18,000 from an 85-year-old Grand Haven woman after convincing her to make two \$9,000 withdrawals last Thursday.

According to Lt. Mark Reiss, the two women first approached the victim at around 2:30 p.m. Thursday outside the Grand Haven Sav-A-Lot, 1051 S. Beacon, to ask whether she had lost a purse they recently found. They later told the woman that the purse allegedly contained \$75,000.

The victim agreed to give the two a ride a short distance away so one of the women allegedly could consult with her attorney about whether they could keep the money.

The woman exited the car in 1000 block of Beacon Boulevard and returned shortly later. She said the attorney told her the three could split the money found in the purse, because it likely had been dropped by a drug dealer.

The woman said her attorney advised them to put their own funds in to make it look like they earned the money in the purse from an investment. The victim then drove to two banks and made two \$9,000 withdrawals.

Reiss said bank employees sought assurances from the victim that she willingly was making the withdrawals and that she was acting alone.

Once she had the money and returned to the car, she drove the two women back to the same area where the alleged attorney office was. The two women exited the car with the money and said they were going to ask the attorney to register the serial numbers. They never returned to the car and the police were contacted.

Persons with possible information, are being asked to contact the department of public safety at (616) 842-3460.

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Hunger Solution Center hosts CROP Walk rally Saturday

Wednesday, September 06, 2006

THE SAGINAW NEWS

Saginaw County CROP Walk recruiters will receive sponsor forms and other information for the annual 10-kilometer walk to raise money for hunger during a rally from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Saturday at the Hunger Solution Center, 940 E. Genesee in

Saginaw.

Johanna Balzer, Lansing-based Michigan associate director for Church World Service, which oversees CROP walks nationwide, will speak at the event.

The one-hour rally, with a formal program instead of the drop-in format of recent years, includes breakfast.

The walk will start at 1 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 8. The trek will begin and end at the Hunger Solution Center, which opened last fall, combining Hidden Harvest and the East Side Soup Kitchen.

Organizers will send funds to Elkhart, Ind.-based Church World Service, which will return one-quarter of the collection to four Saginaw hunger-fighting agencies: East Side Soup Kitchen, Hidden Harvest, Neighborhood House and the Saginaw City Rescue Mission.

For more information on the rally or walk, call Rich Premo, Saginaw County CROP Walk coordinator, at 753-4749. v

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Article published Sep 3, 2006

Some Katrina victims remain in Southfield one year later

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Most are gone now.

But a year ago this weekend, Southfield and Oakland County residents opened their hearts -- and wallets -- as a tidal wave of hurricane victims sought refuge in the area.

The hurricane hit the Gulf Coast on Aug. 28, 2005, immediately scattering residents to Texas and other parts of the country. By Labor Day, eight days later, hundreds of displaced men, women and children were arriving in Michigan.

Detroit, Battle Creek and other communities welcomed almost 2,300 people at the height of the exodus, according to state officials. But Southfield was the city with the largest number of hurricane victims at any one time, Mayor Brenda Lawrence said.

"We had the hotel rooms," Lawrence said, "and agencies in southeast Michigan began sending people to us."

Southfield was a hub for displaced hurricane victims, agreed Margaret C. Warner, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services in Oakland County.

"The city had well over 400 people seeking help," she said.

Most had few, if any, possessions, said Lawrence, "and the need was overwhelming."

But so was the response, although some Southfield officials were concerned about the strain that many refugees might put on community resources.

"I'm proud of how Southfield responded," the mayor said. "But other communities opened their hearts as well."

With FEMA paying some of the expenses, five of the city's hotels opened their doors to Katrina victims. The most visible was the former Ramada Inn (now the Southfield Hotel and Convention Center) on Nine Mile, where as many as 55 of the available 200 rooms were occupied by Katrina victims.

"It was a mad house around here," said Dennis Fraver, a Farmington Hills resident who works at the hotel. "Lots of people were here offering help."

Government agencies took the lead. But individuals were eager to offer assistance. Southfield resident Leonard Holmes, for example, helped people write or update resumes as they began looking for jobs.

Rochester Hills resident Debra Reed took a day off her bank job to work at the hotel. She worked as a greeter, directing victims -- as well as volunteers -- to FEMA, Michigan Human Services, the Salvation Army, Southfield Public Schools and other agencies that set up shop in the hotel.

The schools enrolled more than 50 displaced students last fall, deputy Superintendent Kenson J. Siver

said. Eleven were still enrolled as of last week, he said.

The Southfield Department of Human Services didn't open an office at the hotel, said Rhonda Terry, who coordinated the city's relief efforts. But with donations, from organizations like the Skillman Foundation as well as individuals, the city disbursed more than \$29,000 worth of assistance to 144 people, she said.

"We helped with gas, rent deposits, food vouchers and other assistance," Terry said. "But we weren't the only help available. Churches and private individuals really stepped up."

Students at the Millennium Middle School in South Lyon raised \$250 with a bake sale and penny drives. The prime mover, 12-year-old Austin Sturm, personally delivered the money to Southfield Human Services after learning the city had an inordinate number of Katrina victims.

"Everybody was helpful and generous," said Gloria Sims, whose two grandchildren and other family members fled the 9th Ward of New Orleans hours before Katrina hit.

"A West Bloomfield couple adopted us," she said.

Sims is one of the estimated 980 Katrina victims remaining in Michigan (including 156 in Oakland County) and receiving assistance, said Maureen Sorbet, spokesman for Michigan Human Services.

Sims, a retiree now living in a local apartment, decided to stay in Southfield after twice returning to New Orleans and being shocked by the devastation.

"What I saw broke my heart, she said. "There was 10 feet of water in my house."

Her son has returned to New Orleans, Sims said. But her daughter and son-in-law now work in West Bloomfield, and her grandchildren, ages 6 and 13, attend school in Walled Lake.

Another Katrina victim who decided to stay in Southfield is John Kenner, 76, who has a veteran's pension in addition to social security.

"I really like it here," said Kenner, who still lives in the hotel on Nine Mile. "The people are friendly and helpful.

"And there really isn't a lot to go back to in New Orleans."

Two Takes On 'Session Of Reform'

MIRS, Tuesday, September 5, 2006

On Labor Day Monday, House Speaker Craig [DeROCHE](#) (R-Novi), announced that this brief autumn session would be the "Session for Reform."

According to DeRoche, the House will be acting on "far-ranging legislation to foster a positive environment for job growth, both in areas of reforming state bureaucracy and stopping fraud, to providing the most basic state services for protecting children and seniors."

"We will tackle a range of issues all tied together with one theme — reforming state government to foster a better economic and social climate in Michigan to help create more jobs," DeRoche said. "Many people realize the strength of our economy is linked with the state's overall tax burden, but it's also tied to important factors like education, children's safety and stopping crime."

The House agenda for this month includes:

- Legislation to protect children from sexual predators on online communities such as MySpace (See related story)
- Strengthen state child protection laws and accountability following the recent deaths of children in the Lansing, Flint and Detroit areas (putting child ombudsman under Legislature, see related story)
- Better protect Michigan residents by ensuring that parolees stay off the streets and behind bars (previously announced legislation in reaction to Patrick **SELEPAK** killing spree)
- Cut the nation-leading number of mortgage fraud cases in Michigan
- Strengthen identity theft laws to better protect residents
- Secure Michigan's borders and jobs by requiring stricter citizenship requirements
- Stop certain states from gaining an unfair congressional advantage relating to illegal immigration (HR 97, which moved out of Committee today. It asked Congress to support legislation of U.S. Rep. Candice **MILLER**.)
- New welfare report
- Streamline government efficiency of educational and job training programs

House Minority Leader Dianne [BYRUM](#) (D-Onondaga) responded to the agenda today by stating that what was not on the GOP agenda was more important than what was on it.

"It (the agenda) doesn't include stopping Canadian trash, outsourcing, drug costs . . ." Byrum said. "The people want to put a stop to Canadian trash coming into Michigan. They want to end the drug company immunity law."

Reporters asked Byrum if the Canadian trash issue is still alive considering the announcement last week by U.S. Sen. Debbie **STABENOW** (D-Lansing) that Canadian officials have agreed to phase-out trash exports to Michigan.

"What was announced last week shows clearly that what we've been saying all along is correct," Byrum said.

"Increasing the cost of dumping trash does work. We need legislation that would put a moratorium on creating new landfills. That will help keep create more disincentives."

Byrum also suggested the GOP House agenda is a sign that House Republicans aren't doing well on the campaign trail.

"It's things like welfare reform," Byrum said. "The Republicans are playing to their base. I think they're having trouble in this election."

MIRS asked DeRoche if Byrum's surmise was correct.

"That couldn't be farther from the truth," DeRoche said. "If Dick **DeVOS** does as well as Dick **POSTHUMUS** did (four years ago), we'll be in shape to pick up even more seats than the 63 we did then. And I think DeVos will do better. He'll win."

DeRoche spokesman Matt **RESCH** also added a parting shot.

"I'm curious as to how stopping sexual predators and putting parolees in prison is playing to just the Republican base?" Resch said.



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Poverty levels show `crisis' in city, Cooney says

Wednesday, September 6, 2006

By Kathy Jessup

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U.S. Census Bureau figures that estimate 38 percent of Kalamazoo's children now live in poverty represent ``a crisis," Kalamazoo City Commissioner Don Cooney said Tuesday.

Despite government initiatives for low-income housing, economic development and youth employment, the Kalamazoo Promise scholarship program may offer the best hope for ``turning us around," Kalamazoo Mayor Hannah McKinney said.

City leaders said newly released, mid-decade census data for 2005 indicate Kalamazoo's lackluster statistics on employment, family income and poverty rates appear to mirror trends in other cities like Detroit and Flint. But most troubling to commissioners who commented on the updated federal data Tuesday is Kalamazoo's rising poverty rate.

According to Cooney, a Western Michigan University social work professor, the city's overall poverty rate jumped from 24 percent in 2000 to just over 30 percent, as reported in the Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey. And among families that include children under the age of 18, Kalamazoo's poverty rate has reached 38 percent, up from 27 percent in 2000.

``Nationally, this is also the trend," Cooney said. ``There are families of four with incomes under \$10,000 a year. To me, this is a crisis."

McKinney, a Kalamazoo College economics professor, said she also has reviewed the latest Census Bureau data and found that across the U.S., ``urban core cities like Kalamazoo are being left behind."

``But we have The Promise and it can turn us around," the mayor said, referring to a privately-endowed program that offers up to full-tuition college scholarships to Kalamazoo Public School graduates.

``Ten years from now, we won't look like Detroit and Flint because of this opportunity," McKinney said. ``In the very first year of The Promise, all but 30 of the students who were eligible are using it. As a community, we need to make sure every single child uses The Promise."

The 2005 Census Bureau data show that children in households headed by single mothers are most at risk for living in poverty. In 2005, one of every two children under 18 being reared by a single mother in Kalamazoo lived below the poverty level, compared to 23 percent of children living in two-parent households, it showed.

The federal report pegged unemployment among city of Kalamazoo residents at 13.3 percent.

In other business before the Kalamazoo City Commission on Tuesday, members of the Kalamazoo Homeless Action Network asked commissioners to release \$250,000 pledged to a collaborative housing trust-fund initiative to begin construction now of some new housing for low-income residents. City Manager Kenneth Collard said after the meeting, however, that he's not likely to recommend abandoning the city's call for a partnership and turning over the \$250,000 to a planning committee.

KHAN has been pressuring Kalamazoo County to appropriate money to the housing initiative, and the city also had envisioned using its money to leverage participation by some local foundations.

The commission also approved a Stryker Corp. request to change the street name where its new headquarters is being built from Fairfield Road to Airview Boulevard. The request was made to end confusion between Fairview Road, off Portage Road, and Fairfield Avenue, located north of Gull Road. City officials said Stryker has agreed to ``pay the costs associated with the name change to businesses fronting the current Fairfield Road."

Commissioners also approved a lease that will pay Kalamazoo Metal Recyclers \$1,000 a year for five years to allow Mayors' Riverfront Park's parking lot to encroach on KMR's property line. The metal recycling firm will allow a setback for new fencing that will establish an ``open-space buffer" between the park and the business, under the agreement.

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September 6, 2006

Unger faces wrongful death suit

Attorney claims estate of Huntington Woods man's slain wife is owed for funeral, burial and other expenses.

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

PONTIAC -- A wrongful death lawsuit has been filed against Mark Unger for the October 2003 death of his wife, Florence, at a northern Michigan lakeside resort.

The Oakland Circuit Court lawsuit cites testimony and evidence leading to Unger's June 21 first-degree murder conviction. It claims since the Huntington Woods man caused his 37-year-old wife's death, then her estate -- represented by the River Place Trust -- should be able to recover damages, including all expenses incurred for her funeral and burial.

Unger, 45, is incarcerated in the Ionia state correctional facility serving a life term with no chance of parole. The couple, who were in the midst of a divorce at the time of her death, have two sons, 10 and 13.

Presumably, the boys would be the beneficiaries of any estate left by Florence Unger, a mortgage banker, including damages for their personal suffering and loss of her support, services and earnings.

"We have to determine what her worth is, but it would certainly include personal property like their house, land contracts and also life insurance policies that (Mark) Unger put into an escrow account rather than signed over to his sons or the trust," said trust attorney Alan A. May. "His appeal (of his conviction) could take years. My concern is to protect whatever there is in her estate for her sons."

May said the lawsuit was an extension of the state slayer statute, which forbids a person convicted of causing a death to any way profit from that same death, by insurance, property or otherwise. He assumed Unger "will not even answer the complaint."

"If he does, that would open him up to other questions which might impact any future appeal," May said.

May obtained a court order last week to permit Florence Unger's father, Harold Stern, to visit the Ungers' Huntington Woods home and determine what, if anything, might have been removed from the dwelling. Stern is temporary court-appointed custodian of the two boys.

May said he would like to begin making mortgage payments on the house that Unger discontinued earlier this year when his trial began in Benzie Circuit Court.

It is unclear who would represent Unger in any civil matter. Attorney Robert S. Harrison, who led Unger's criminal defense at trial said, "I don't know what someone hopes to accomplish with this (lawsuit)."

"Any estate would logically go to his sons; he wouldn't have it any other way," Harrison said.

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JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

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News Release

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CTF approves \$547,536 for 18 child abuse prevention projects

September 5, 2006

LANSING -- The Michigan Children's Trust Fund Board of Directors (CTF) recently voted to allocate \$547,536 in new funding to 18 local prevention projects that fulfill the trust fund's core mission of child abuse and neglect prevention in Michigan. The projects serve persons in 29 counties.

"These programs protect children and strengthen parents' skills," CTF Executive Director Richard Bearup said. "They continue the governor's and Legislature's commitment to protecting and improving the lives of Michigan's children."

Thirty-six proposals were considered and half were funded in the competitive process. They range from a \$60,000 grant to the West Midland Family Center for a Preschool Family Mentoring project to a \$5,560 grant to the Alger County Regional Medical Health System to expand parenting workshops at the Marquette General Hospital. A complete list of projects and summaries is attached.

The Children's Trust Fund of Michigan provides grants for public education, training and technical assistance, and fund a network of local, community-based child abuse prevention programs and services across the state. It is the only statewide nonprofit organization solely dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Michigan.

Established by state law in 1982, the CTF is guided by a 15-member board of directors, 10 of whom are appointed by the governor with advice and consent of the Senate. The board is chaired by Nancy Moody and includes DHS Director Marianne Udow as a standing committee member. CTF does not receive state appropriations and is funded by interest income from a restricted trust fund and direct donations, including the Children's License Plate and an income tax check-off box.

For more information about the Children's Trust Fund, go to www.michigan.gov/ctf

For more information about the Department of Human Services, go to www.michigan.gov/dhs

Grantee	City	Count(ies) Served	Amount
Women's Resource Center	Howell	Livingston	\$16,200.40
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Marquette County	Negaunee	Marquette	\$25,331.51
Branch Hillsdale St. Joseph Community Health Agency	Hillsdale	Hillsdale	\$38,288.36
Child & Family Services of Western Michigan	Holland	Muskegon	\$17,124
West Midland Family Center	Shepherd	Midland	\$60,000
Power Inc.	Ann Arbor	Washtenaw	\$30,000
West Michigan Community Mental Health System	Ludington	Lake, Mason, Oceana	\$35,202.18
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Lansing	Lansing	Ingham, Eaton, Clinton, Shiawassee, Ionia	\$34,666
Development Centers, Inc.	Detroit	Wayne	\$25,273.75
Regional Medical Health System	Marquette	Alger	\$5,560
Children's Assessment Center	Grand Rapids	Kent	\$32,427
Children's Resource Network	Holland	Ottawa	\$20,000
Keweenaw Family Resource Center	Houghton	Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw	\$34,989.97
Oakland Family Services	Pontiac	Oakland	\$48,961.87
Family & Children Services of Midland	Midland	Midland	\$30,512.19
Catholic Social Services of Muskegon	Muskegon	Muskegon	\$31,000
Third Level Crisis Intervention Center	Traverse City	Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau	\$27,00
Children's Aid Society	Detroit	Wayne	\$34,998.87
Total Grant Awards			\$547,536.10

GRANT SUMMARIES

Women's Resource Center of Livingston County: The Healthy Family Livingston (HFL) program will expand the existing 12-week Steven Bavolek Nurturing Parenting Program by offering two 12-week programs for an expanded audience – families with children from birth to age 12 who live in the Fowlerville and Gregory communities. The HFL program fosters the absence of child abuse and neglect and improves family functioning by promoting the presence of “nurturing” and teaches five constructs of nurturing – empathy, appropriate developmental expectations, positive discipline, appropriate parent and child roles, power and independence.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Marquette: The Turnaround Program will enhance and expand services to families and youth in the Gwinn/K.I. Sawyer communities. BBBS will provide three model mentoring programs designed to meet the needs of youth in the area: one-on-one traditional match program, Kappa Kids program and Lunch Buddies program.

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency: Healthy Beginnings of Hillsdale County will expand the Healthy Beginnings Teen Program by offering prenatal education classes and a new menu of supportive group opportunities. The program will offer parent education using the Parents As Teachers specialized curriculum with pregnant teens and teen parents with children between the ages of zero-three year olds with risk factors associated with abuse and neglect.

Child and Family Services of Western Michigan: The Circle of Parents program will target those communities in Muskegon County with high unemployment rates and a substantial number of children living in poverty. Parents will be connecting to a place where they will build their own sense of competence and power. Parents will do this by building relationships and connecting with other parents who share common experiences, successes, and challenges.

West Midland Family Center: The Preschool Family Mentoring Project is based on the Family Development Matrix which is a tool to help families recognize their strengths and assist family workers with accurate information regarding family needs and outcomes. A Family Mentor will establish a relationship of trust with parents whose children attend the West Midland Family Center Preschool program by nurturing parents, providing them with care, support and training so parents can nurture their children.

Power Inc. The Parents' Night Out program will offer psycho-educational and therapeutic support to parents and their children in a 6-week, ninety-minute format to families who are at-risk of child abuse and neglect and will serve 30 families per year. The program will provide parent education, support, mentorship and enrichment to parents undergoing stress, knowledge of child development, leisure planning, non-abusive discipline, stress management, money management, self-esteem, empowerment, and nurturing parent-child relationships.

West Michigan Community Mental Health System: Building Healthy Happy Families (BHHF) is an intensive prevention program over a three-year period that is designed to serve 40-50 families with children, age 0-5, who reside in Lake, Mason and Oceana Counties. BHHF provides an intensive outreach process that engages families in a combined parent/infant/toddler and parent/parent interaction through twice-weekly group meetings. The program provides home support and actively seeks parent participants who are interested in becoming Parent Peer Specialists.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Lansing: BBBS of Greater Lansing will mentor an additional 30 families and children through the Family Mentoring Network. The goal is to strengthen at-risk families through individualized mentoring. Adult and youth mentors will assist the at-risk family in developing self-sustaining life skills and the ability to utilize services within a 6-12 month period.

Development Centers, Inc.: The Bright Stars Early Childhood Prevention Program will offer families a menu of services including newsletters, educational group sessions, home visits, support groups, developmental screenings and referrals for additional services. Group sessions will focus on developmental stages, discipline, and parental expectations. Home visits will provide one-on-one services to the family and demonstrate specific parenting techniques in a comfortable, natural environment.

Regional Medical Health System: Becoming a Parent Workshop is an expansion of the Joy of Parenting Programs offered by the Women's & Children's Center of Marquette General Hospital. This monthly workshop will give expectant and new parents the helpful tools needed to provide proper care to newborns and infants by providing new parents accurate information about newborn/infant development and methods of care. Topics presented will include: newborn characteristics and infant development, understanding and dealing with crying, playing and communicating, sleep issues, feeding methods, shaken baby syndrome, and safety issues.

Children's Assessment Center: The Kidz Have Rights: Your Body Belongs to You program reaches out to children before abuse occurs and targets third graders in the Grand Rapids Public School District. This program will 1) educate and train children about body safety "rights; 2) increase children's ability to recognize touches that may lead to sexual abuse; 3) increase retention of learned skills/information; 4) help children identify safe adults who they can tell if abuse occurs; 5) educate teachers about recognizing and responding appropriately to disclosures or suspicions of sexual abuse; 6) inform/educate/reinforce body safety information for parents; and 7) increase communication about body safety between parent/child.

Children's Resource Network: The Respite Program will provide services to at least 75 children with Autism Spectrum Disorder by coordinating with other community agencies to identify and provide respite services, develop training, and create a larger network of respite providers to refer parents based on their individual needs, provide subsidized payment to registered respite providers, and enhance the overall delivery of respite services.

Keweenaw Family Resource Center: The First Link: Family Support Program is designed to create opportunities for families that increase their protective factors while minimizing their risks. This program will enhance and generate programs for parents with young children and pregnant teens by using the Hawaii Early Learning Profile and Florida State University Partners for a Healthy Baby curriculums in home visiting and support programs to focus on reducing stress and increasing parenting and child development education.

Oakland Family Services: Infant Mental Health Services provides access to in-office psychiatric assessment and medication monitoring to pregnant and new moms who have postpartum depression (PBD), anxiety, or other mood disorders. This program will be expanded and enhanced by adding parent support groups and PPD therapy groups that include a therapeutic nursery for children.

Family and Children Services of Midland: Child Care Concepts 4C will provide a combination of lecture, role play, video taped modeling, and individual on-site demonstration and coaching to teach child care providers how to establish environments conducive to positive behaviors and to manage undesirable behaviors in an appropriate way.

Catholic Social Services of Muskegon: Muskegon Healthy Families Prenatal Program provides intensive home visitation services by a highly trained Family Support Worker to pregnant women on a voluntary basis. Home visits will address prenatal care, child development, and parent/child interactions. Services will also include support, education, case management, support groups, incentives and assistance in accessing a variety of community resources.

Third Level Crisis Intervention Center: Homeless to Wholeness for Runaway, Homeless and Street Youth will provide temporary emergency shelter for runaway youth for up to a two week stay. Individual, family and group counseling, case management, and aftercare services will be provided using the Positive Youth Development Approach.

Children's Aid Society: The Loving Children Project will: 1) conduct parenting groups for the purpose of training and educating parents on how to be effective parents, with emphasis on communication, conflict resolution, and child development; 2) conduct family counseling sessions to assess family strengths and problems and develop methods to resolve problems; and 3) provide information and referral services to parents to meet needs of the family.